

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
73544 Hwy 64
Meeker, CO 81641

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-110-2005-036 -EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional): COC-62806

PROJECT NAME: APD well #6G4

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T.2S, R97W, SWSE sec.9, 6th PM (total depth/production zone location), existing wells and well pad are located on FEE land in section 16.

APPLICANT: ExxonMobil Corporation

ISSUES AND CONCERNS (optional): Well pad already exists on fee land with existing fee wells. Well #6G4 would be located on existing well pad on fee surface and bottom hole will be directionally drilled to BLM minerals on lease COC-62806.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Proposed Action: The applicant proposes to directionally drill an additional well from an existing fee well pad (sec. 16) with existing fee wells. Only the directionally drilled bottom hole production zone (total depth) would be on federal BLM lease COC-62806 (sec. 9).

No Action Alternative: No additional environmental consequences would be considered.

NEED FOR THE ACTION: To respond to request by applicant to exercise lease rights and develop hydrocarbon reserves.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Pages 2-49 thru 2-52

Decision Language: “To make public lands available for the siting of public and private facilities through the issuance of applicable land use authorizations, in a manner that provides for reasonable protection of other resource values.”

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements listed below:

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: Directional drilling will be initiated on deeded land with a destination culminating on BLM land. If there is strict adherence to the proposed action and no unforeseen accidents the unsurveyed surface area of BLM should not be disturbed.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: BLM surface area should remain undisturbed.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: 1) No archaeological survey was conducted on the BLM land which is the destination of this directional drilling based on Exxon’s position that there would be no surface disturbance. Should disturbance inadvertently, unintentionally, or unknowingly occur, the operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they may be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

3) Any proposed disturbance on BLM surface will be treated as a new and independent action.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: There is no Federal surface associated with this action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: None

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: None

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: This action is located on an existing well pad along a paved and heavily traveled road and would involve no further surface disturbance. It is unlikely that any migratory bird nesting activity takes place in close proximity to these features.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Because of a lack of suitable habitat and high levels of existing disturbance, there is no reasonable probability that this action would have any influence on migratory bird nesting activity.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would influence migratory bird nesting activity.

Mitigation: None

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no known hazardous or other solid wastes on the subject lands. No hazardous materials are known to have been used, stored or disposed of at sites included in the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: No listed or extremely hazardous materials in excess of threshold quantities are proposed for use in this project. While commercial preparations of fuels and lubricants proposed for use may contain some hazardous constituents, they would be stored, used and transported in a manner consistent with applicable laws, and the generation of hazardous wastes would not be anticipated. Solid wastes would be properly disposed of.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No hazardous or other solid wastes would be generated under the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: The operator shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed actions.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED:

No ACEC's, flood plains, prime and unique farmlands, wetlands and riparian zones, Wilderness, or Wild and Scenic Rivers, or threatened, endangered or sensitive plants or animals exist within the area affected by the proposed action. No impacts to Air quality or water quality would occur because the proposed action does not include any new surface disturbances on public lands. Further, the proposed action would not alter water qualities ability to meet the Public Land Health Standard. For threatened, endangered and sensitive plant and animals, Public Land Health Standards are not applicable since neither the proposed nor the no-action alternative would have any influence on populations of, or habitats potentially occupied by, special status species. There are also no Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action.

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

SOILS, VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standards 1 and 3)

Affected Environment: There is no Federal surface associated with this action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Impacts would not occur since there will not be any surface disturbance associated with the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils and plant and animal communities: Soils and vegetation currently meet the Public Land Health Standards. The proposed action will not alter this.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: This well would be drilled from a previously developed pad on private surface. Although located in the Piceance Creek valley, the nearest manageable channel reach administered by the BLM is approximately 10 miles downstream.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: This action would be confined to an existing well pad and would involve no new surface disturbance that could contribute sediments to the Piceance Creek channel. Drilling and completion activities would take place on a stabilized and maintained surface where drainage is appropriately managed. There is no reasonable likelihood that these activities would contribute off-site contaminants to the creek.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would affect aquatic resources.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): This action would have no influence on Public Land surface resources and would remain neutral in its affect on aquatic or riparian resources. Both the proposed and no-action alternatives would not affect the current status of Land Health Standards as applied to aquatic wildlife.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: This action is encompassed by deer severe winter range, but the project site's functional qualities as winter range are heavily affected by its location adjacent to a heavily traveled highway.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: All activity associated with well development would take place on an existing well pad adjacent to the Piceance Creek road. Disturbance associated with well development would be confined to this travel corridor and would not add measurably to ongoing influences on deer distribution or activity patterns. There are no raptor cliff nest sites potentially influenced by this action.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that could influence wildlife resources.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): This action would have no influence on Public Land surface resources and would remain neutral in its affect on wildlife habitat or populations. Both the proposed and no-action alternatives would not affect the current status of Land Health Standards as applied to wildlife.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access and Transportation	X		
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire Management	X		
Forest Management	X		
Geology and Minerals			X
Hydrology/Water Rights	X		
Law Enforcement		X	
Noise			
Paleontology	X		
Rangeland Management	X		
Realty Authorizations	X		
Recreation	X		
Socio-Economics		X	
Visual Resources	X		
Wild Horses	X		

GEOLOGY AND MINERALS

Affected Environment: . The surface geologic formation of the well location is alluvium and ExxonMobil's targeted zone is in the Mesaverde. During drilling potential water, oil shale, sodium, and gas zones will be encountered from surface to the targeted zone. Aquifers that will be encountered during drilling are the Perched in the Uinta, the A-groove, B-groove and the Dissolution Surface in the Green River formation. These aquifer zones are also known for difficulties in drilling and cementing. Oil shale resources are located in the Green River formation. The bottom hole location is located on Federal oil and Gas Lease COC-62806.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The cementing procedure of the proposed actions isolates the formations and will prevent the migration of gas, water, and oil between formations. This includes oil shale and coal zones. However, conventional recovery of

the coals is not considered feasible at the depths that are encountered in the well. Development of this well will deplete the natural gas resources in the targeted formation

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The natural gas resources in the targeted zone would not be recovered at this time.

Mitigation: None

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: The Cumulative impacts of oil and gas developments in this area were analyzed in the White River RMP, based on a reasonable foreseeable development scenario which assumed a total of ten acres per well/pad. This action would involve fewer acres, and the resultant cumulative impacts would be consistent with that analysis.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED: None

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility
Caroline Hollowed	P&EC	Air Quality
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
Gabrielle Elliott	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources Paleontological Resources
Mark Hafkenschiel	Range Mgt. Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Wildlife
Bo Brown	Hazmat Collateral	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid
Caroline Hollowed	P & EC	Water Quality, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness
Caroline Hollowed	P & EC	Soils
Mark Hafkenschiel	Range MGT. Specialist	Vegetation
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Access and Transportation
Ken Holsinger	Natural Resource Specialist	Fire Management
Robert Fowler	Forester	Forest Management
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals
Mark Hafkenschiel	Range Mgt. Specialist	Rangeland Management
Penny Brown	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation
Keith Whitaker	Natural Resource Specialist	Visual Resources
Valerie Dobrich	Natural Resource Specialist	Wild Horses

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)

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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE: The environmental assessment and analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION/RATIONALE: It is my decision to approve the development of Well # 6G4 from an existing well pad as described in the proposed action, with mitigation listed below. This development, with mitigation, is consistent with the decisions in the White River ROD/RMP, and environmental impacts will be minimal.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

1. (a) No archaeological survey was conducted on the BLM land which is the destination of this directional drilling based on Exxon's position that there would be no surface disturbance. Should disturbance inadvertently, unintentionally, or unknowingly occur, the operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they may be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

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(b) Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

(c) Any proposed disturbance on BLM surface will be treated as a new and independent action.

2. The operator shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed actions.

NAME OF PREPARER: Keith Whitaker

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Caroline P. Hollowed

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: Scott W. Paine
for Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 01-20-05

ATTACHMENTS: